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AN  
EXHORTATION  
TO  
Peace and Union,  
IN A  
SERMON

PREACHED  
At St. LAWRENCE - JURY,  
ON

Tuesday the 26th of Novemb. Licens'd the 29th 1689.

By the Right Reverend Father in God, GILBERT Lord  
Bishop of SARUM.

ACTS 7. v. 26. *Sirs, ye are Brethren, Why do ye wrong one to another?*

**T**HE open Assaults and the secret Practices of our Enemies are things that we are prepared for, we look for them, and guard against them; so that we are not surpris'd with them, nor unprovided when they appear. But the mutual Animosities of those who are all united in the same Common Interests, and that ought to be animated with the same Spirit, have somewhat in them that is more terrible, that carries the Character of a Nation, not capable of a Deliverance, but fitted for destruction. This is at all times deplorable, but sometimes it is so dismal, that it is not easie to see a People in such a State, when their Dangers are extreme; without concluding that so fatal a madness must be the Mark as well as the effect of some Stroke from Heaven.

Who could have seen *Jerusalem* in the State which *Josephus* describes it, without concluding them Cursed of God? Besieged by the greatest

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Power

Power that was then in the World, and languishing in Famine; yet in the intervals of the Attacks of their Enemies, giving one another no rest, but divided into three great Parties, who were Butchering one another, as oft as their Enemies gave them leisure for it.

Somewhat not unlike this, though in a lower form, is set forth in the words of my Text: The Posterity of Jacob had endured a terrible Bondage in Egypt, and it was no wonder if while they groaned under such an oppression, an Israelite and an Egyptian were engaged in a Quarrel, in which Moses it seem took it for granted, that the Egyptian was in the Wrong, and so he killed him in the assistance of an injured Israelite. But it was an astonishing thing to him to see two Israelites fighting; therefore he who was the meekest Man in the Earth, studied to soften both their minds with a reproof that in very gentle words, set forth the madness of their quarrel with great Authority.

They were Brethren either as they were one people engaged all in the same Interests, groaning under the same miseries, and wishing for the same common Deliverance; or as they were all initiated into the same Covenant with God, as being the Seed of Abraham according to the promise made to him. But besides this general consideration of their being Brethren, there were two special ones that enforced it in their present Circumstances.

They were in Bondage to a strong, an ingrateful, a perfidious, and a cruel Enemy; that forgetful of all the Services Joseph had rendered the Crown, was not satisfied with condemning them to an ignominious Slavery: but carried this to so Brutal a degree of Cruelty, as to design the Murder of all their Male Issue, and even to oblige Parents to destroy the fruit of their own Body. Now while they were under so terrible a Bondage, it seemed a very unnatural piece of madness for them to have any Quarrels among themselves. But besides this they had reason to believe that a deliverance was approaching: the time that was marked by Prophecy, ( Gen. 15. 13. ) for the continuance of their Captivity was now almost expired; so they had reason to believe that God was to appear very speedily, and to set them at liberty: and therefore nothing was more contrary to that prospect, than for them in such a state of things to engage into Quarrels and Animosities, which might naturally have produced such Consequences, that they must have been very much disabled from

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from being the Instruments of Heaven in such a glorious Work, as that  
which they had reason to conclude was now near at hand, since the Pe-  
riod of 430 Years was now expiring.

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From the Consideration of the mutual tie of their being Brethren, it  
was reasonable to expostulate, as *Moses* did, *Why do ye wrong one to ano-  
ther?* Insinuating that in such quarrellings the wrong lay not only on  
the one side, but was mutual. Both were to blame, they wronged one  
another, and wronged the Publick besides. But though both were in  
the wrong, we see who was most so, even he that would not hear of a  
reconciliation, or of the putting a stop to the Quarrel; he reproached  
*Moses* with the assistance that he had given the day before to an Israelite  
against an Egyptian: so enraged he was at the friendly interposition of  
*Moses* in the matter, that he seems concerned for the Egyptian that was  
killed; a Publick Enemy being less hated than a Brother, when those Do-  
mestick Feuds are once raised to any height; even a Reconciler becomes  
then more odious than an Alien.

This is the account of the occasion on which these words were spoken,  
and of the words themselves, and of the effect they had. In the next  
place, let us consider how far we may be concerned in them.

We have been engaged in a great and hard struggle with open Ene-  
mies, as cruel and as treacherous as *Pharaoh* or the Egyptians ever were:  
We have overcome them, but now we are falling into mutual quarrel-  
lings; some are whetting on their spirits to Revenge, by the remem-  
brance of past Errors, with relation to Civil Matters: others are raising  
up those Disputes, which have been already once and again so fatal to us,  
that they have given us often cause to wish, that they had never been once  
named amongst us, and after all these unhappy Consequences, that such  
things have hitherto had, we are now again trying our Strength, muster-  
ing our Forces, and raising within our own Minds, and in the Minds of  
all, over whom we have any Influence, all the sowness and peevish-  
ness that is possible, which at any other time were an inexcusable piece of  
Folly, but now it is a Madness that wants a Name. Let us then so far  
at least take breath in our Quarrel, as to hearken to these words, and to  
examine what is imported by them. *Ye are Brethren.*

This belongs to us, first, as we are *Englishmen*, all of the same Nation  
under the same Laws, and the same Protection, shut up indeed in an  
Island



Island, which as it separates us from all the World, so it secures us against all the World. We were anciently a broken People divided into many Kingdoms, and tho' most of these were swallowed up many Ages ago, yet we were never brought all under one Head before the beginning of this Century: Our Climate, it is true, is none of the best; we have but a faint Sun, and the Product of our Soil cannot be compared with that of more Southern Regions; but our Ports and Rivers give us such Advantages, that we send out both Colonies and Manufactures all the World over, and fetch home rich Returns; so that we have both Security and Wealth beyond any of our Neighbours.

It is a melancholy thing to live upon a Continent, and to be subject to the Chances of War, and to all the Depredations, and Miseries which follow all Wars; but it is yet much more unhappy to be in the Neighbourhood of that cruel and barbarous Enemy of Mankind, who having laid off all the tenderness of humane Nature, and the regards that have been by a common consent held sacred in the most destructive Wars, executes whole Countries all at once: who after all the Wealth that can possibly be squeezed out of them, is drawn from them to the last Farthing for purchasing a Security for their Houses, Persons, and Cattel: Who I say, after these Securities are so dearly paid for, sends the final Order of destroying all, and burning, and wasting every thing without exception. I speak not this to aggravate matters with words of Pomp; I say nothing but what they do daily practise, and of which I have seen many fatal Proofs in the Ruins of many great Towns, and large Countries, where the Words of (Joel, 2. 3.) were literally accomplished by that devouring Army; the Countrey before them being like the Garden of Eden, but behind them like a desolate Wilderness.

But our Security from Enemies without us, is but half our Happiness: We are safe at home likewise, having the blessing of a Government so tempered, that as we are not exposed to the Fury of a levelling Multitude, nor the Confusions of an Equality among Men, but have a Government that is strong and firm enough to keep us in Order and Obedience; so we have the greatest Blessing that can be found in Government in as high a degree as wise men can desire. Oh! the difference between us and some happier Climates, where mens Estates and Liberties, and often their

Lives



Lives are at the mercy of mere Humour and Passion: where the Frowns of a Court can throw a man in a moment from the most plentiful to the most miserable Condition imaginable: where one rash word is thought Crime enough for a perpetual Imprisonment joyned with all the Circumstances of Rigour that can render it much more terrible than Death itself; so that if such Tyrants do not make many publick Examples of their Severity, their Design in so doing seems only to be to lengthen out the Miseries of such as suffer at their hands, that so they may glut themselves with a more lasting Revenge. I say, nothing of those terrible Impositions by which they eat out the Fortunes, and the very Strength of their Subjects, all mens Estates by a quick Circulation, are melted into the support of their unjust Wars, or Extravagant expences; and the poorer sort must give at least the half of their time to work, in order to the paying those cruel Taxes, by which they grind their People. Their ruined Houses, their ragged Cloaths, their hungry Looks, and their half-naked Children, give evident Proofs of the Tyranny of those Governments, that can render their People extremely miserable, in spite of all that abundance which Nature has set before them, while Millions of People are pining away in Want and Beggary, that so a few may surfeit themselves with all the Excesses of fullness and Vice. This is a short hint of that which every one that has travelled abroad has seen in the richest Countries beyond Sea, God grant we may never see it nearer. But we know it has been the Language of all the Flatterers of lawless Power, that nothing can tame People, and make them quiet and obedient but Poverty; whereas plenty makes them haughty and mutinous, as if Pharaoh's Maxims had been to be derived to all his Successors in Tyranny. ( *Exod. 5, 17.* ) *Ye are idle, ye are idle, therefore ye say, let me go.*

We are all then brethren, as we are *Englishmen* and *Freemen*, born under a Government that gives us all possible Securities for both Liberty and Property, the two chief earthly blessings of humane Nature, whose Persons can neither be restrained, nor punished beyond the bounds of Law; who can be charged with no Taxes but by their own Consent; and who be subject to no Laws but what were prayed by themselves.

Happy Liberty! and happy Subjects! if they but knew their own Happiness; but as good Men love Liberty, so it is only wise Men that can value it and secure it; Fools part with it easily, and if they pay but a little

little for the purchase of it, are apt to think it is dear bought. The *Israelites* in their March when they saw not the abundance to which they had been accustomed in *Egypt*, wish'd themselves there again; (*Exod. 16. 3*) so a voluptuous Nation that was over-set with abundance, and corrupted with Luxury, may think it was better with them when they were languishing away under that false appearance of Plenty, into a certain Ruine; than now, if their Prospect of Liberty is like for a year or two to force them to be a little more frugal and sober, less vain, and less prodigal: such a lessening of Expence to secure Liberty, will appear intolerable to those that have not sense enough to value it, nor Vertue enough to starve their Vices, that they may settle it upon themselves and their Posterities.

Our Neighbours in the low Countries after they had felt the smart of Tyranny, resolved either to recover their Liberty, or to perish in the Attempt, and by a War of Forty Years continuance a small Corner of the World maintained it self against the greatest Power then in *Europe*, and was reduced to a Misery and Poverty, that nothing but an obstinate Resolution of being Freeman, or of perishing, could have supported. In Conclusion their Noble Designs were bless'd with success, they became the Wonder, and the Envy of the World, the Arbiters of *Europe*, and the Supports of that very Power which then studied to crush them, and to crown their Glory, the Instruments of giving us Liberty, as well as of securing their own. And yet after all this, tho' the Name of their Government has a greater sound towards Liberty than our own, we are really the much freer People of the two, where every man has a more open access to a proportioned share in the Government, than among them.

That small Expence which we may borrow from our Pleasures to secure our Liberty will be soon repayed to us in that firm and settled Happiness which is in our view. We run indeed the hazard of losing it, and we deserve that it should be so, if we either throw it up, as not worth the holding, or let it be snatched from us by the great Ravisher of Liberty, and common Enemy to Mankind: the truth is that Corruption of our Morals which is spread so universally over the Nation, gives us just Cause of apprehending that we have not Vertue enough left to maintain Liberty. But that as the voluptuous and degenerated *Romans*, after that they had shaken off *Cæsar's* Tyranny, were too much vitiated to return to their

Ancient

*Isra-* Ancient Government, and so they quickly fell under a new, a worse, and more lasting Tyranny. Thus we who have fallen so far from the Vertues of our Ancestors, can never be able to maintain those Rights which they derived to us, if we do not resolve to return to their Vertues, and to cleanse our selves of those Vices which do deprave us. If we will unite in maintaining this common Cause, and concur with every man who on this occasion is willing to shew himself an *Englishman*, if we will forget all our little Interests to mind this great One, and sacrifice small matters for the saving our All, then we will shew that we are brethren, all born of one common Mother, and all equally concerned in her Preservation.

But in this *ye are Brethren*, there is a closer relation implied; That as the *Jews* were all *Brethren* with regard to that Covenant to which they had a Right, as they were *Abraham's Seed*; so we Christians are *Brethren*, as we profess the same common Christianity, and look for the same common Salvation. As we are *Christians*, or as we are *Protestants*, we are *Brethren*, believing the same Gospel, owning the same God, and the same Saviour, animated by the same Spirit, and hoping to live together in the same state of happiness for ever. In all these respects we are *Brethren*; for that we are *Protestants*, imports no more but that we are *Christians*, who believe that holy Religion in the same Purity and Simplicity in which it was at first delivered to the World. If there happen to be any Diversities among us about some lesser things; we ought first to compare the Importance of that in which we agree, with that in which we differ; and if we find the one is vastly great, and the other is nothing in comparison to it, then it is plain, that small Differences must give place to the greater Points, in which we are at one; for all that act otherwise, shew clearly, that tho' they do not think it decent to speak out what they think, yet in their Hearts they undervalue the common Interest of the Protestant Religion in which we agree, but set a real Value upon indifferent matters, and are acted by the Heats and Animosities of a Party, to which all other things give place. It was not only a certain sign of Ruine to the *Jews*, but an infallible Cause of it, that while they were besieged by the *Romans*, in stead of consulting together the Methods of their common Defence, they were broke into such irreconcilable Feuds, that they no sooner had a time of breathing given them by their Besiegers, than they fell upon one another, so that



that they became their own most implacable Enemies. When the *Saracens* were too hard for the whole State of Christendom, the Eastern and Western Churches fell out about so trifling a matter, as whether the Bread in the Sacrament ought to be leavened, or not : This first broke them, then some other matters not much more important, were found out to widen the breach, which had such Effects, that the Western Nations that ought to have supported the *Greek* Church and Empire, if not out of Charity to them, yet out of a due care of themselves, that they might be covered by such a *Barrier* from the *Turkish* Empire, lookt on, and saw them destroyed, and found themselves by that means exposed to a Power that has been so often formidable to *Europe*. Shall not the madness and Miseries of others make us so wise as to fortifie our selves all we can, and to forget, if we cannot quite remove the Occasions of our Differences : Shall an evil Spirit still prevail among us to the defeating all the Designs of Providence, and the crossing of all Attempts for Peace and Union ? so that neither the Errors that all men seemed lately to confess, nor the Promises which were then generally made, neither our late distresses, nor our present Dangers, can bring us to a sound Mind, or to a calm Temper, *that in this our day we may know the things that belong to our Peace*. It is indeed strange that we should not know them, when all the World besides us knows them. But as there is nothing that can tend to the strengthening of all Bodies so much, as their being united among themselves ; so there is somewhat so peculiar to the Genius of the Christian Religion, that both obliges us to Peace and Love, and also disposes us to it, that we cannot give a more eminent proof of our ignorance of the main Design of our great Master, and of his blessed Doctrine, than to delight in everlasting Quarrelling, and to hate, and study to destroy those for whom Christ died. Nor does any thing defeat the design, nor stop the progress of Religion, so much as the Divisions of those who profess it ; for these do divert all men from better things, as much as they scandalize the World against those who promote them with so much Zeal.

When the Reformation appeared first in the World, it made a mighty progress ; whole States and Kingdoms embraced it so fast, that the Advances it made in the hands of a few Instruments, seemed to supply the want of Miracles, and look't like a great one it self : but all on a sudden it came to a full stop, and now for above an hundred years it has

gained

gained little ground, but lost much. The chief reason that can be assigned for this, is, That those who embraced it, instead of carrying on their common Cause with an united strength, have fallen a quarrelling among themselves about some Uncertain and Inconsiderable things. Those in *Germany* being broken about the manner of the Presence in the Sacrament; though all agree, that neither the one, nor the other Opinion has any relation, either to the Worship of God, or to any Practical Duty: Those in *Holland* have quarrell'd about the Decrees and Councils of God, though both sides acknowledge that it is a Mystery past finding out: And we here in *England* have had a long and fierce Contest about things, which we all confess are indifferent in their own nature.

This Animosity works still so high among us, that many take fire upon the smallest steps that can be made towards the healing so great a Breach; and fill all places with Tragical Outcries, as if the Church of *England* were to be pulled down: while the chief Promoters of these Reports know well how false they are; and that instead of offering at any thing that can in any sort weaken our Church, every thing which has been endeavoured, must prove its Strength, as well as its Glory; if we are so happy as to weigh all in even Ballances. The things that are proposed are of themselves desirable, though there should not be one Dissenter gained by them; and are such as will tend to the making all the parts of our Offices both more Unexceptionable, and more Edifying. But Distempers are far gone, when the Patient rages at the first mention of a Medicine. We have lost many happy Opportunities since the first beginnings of the Reformation among us, for the healing our Breaches: One is sorry to remember them, and wishes that such fatal Errors could be covered from the Knowledge of all succeeding Ages for the sake of the Church, and of those who have governed it. But if we do again repeat former Errors, and let the present Advantages that we have now in our hands slip from us, what is to be said upon it, but that this is of the Lord, who by it is punishing us for our other sins, for our Remissness in our Duties; for our neglect of the Pastoral Care; for our slackning that strictness of Life which becomes our Profession; for our Indulging our selves too much in Sensuality and Laziness; and for all

all those other sins, by which we have ( Mal. 2. 8, 9. ) *departed from his Law, and have corrupted the Covenant of Levi, and made many to stumble at the Law* ; ( Jer. 10. 21. ) *And that therefore God will make us become base and contemptible before the People* ; and that all our Flocks shall be scattered. But we might hope for better things, if every one would put away all Prejudices, all Wrath, Anger, and Revenge ; and would put on the Robes of Mercies and Kindness, remembering that we are Brethren. So that having purified our selves from Humour, Passion, Interest, and every thing else that may corrupt our mind, *unto heaven's new love of the brethren, we would resolve to love one another with a pure heart fervently* : And in stead of the Pride of not yielding to one another in any thing, we should rather engage into a holy Emulation of trying who could yield most for the healing of those wounds that have been so often opened, and that begin now again to bleed afresh.

It is not the Differences themselves that keep us asunder, they are too Inconsiderable for that. It is a secret dislike that we bear to one another : For as the Greeks and Latines could never have fallen out about so inconsiderable a matter as the Leavening the Bread in the Sacrament, if the dispute about the Authority of the Bishops of Rome and Constantinople had not embittered their minds : So our Subjects of Dispute are only the Occasions by which our Uncharitableness workes, and if by bringing our selves to a more Christian Temper, that hidden Disease were once cured, all the Symptoms of it would fall off of themselves, and men would grow ashamed that they had ever spent so much Time and so much Zeal about things which deserve them so little. The Apostles who were full of this Divine Temper, after they themselves had judged in a Dispute of much more Consequence than any is among us, yet were not only willing to let the Jews continue to do as they had wont to do, but even *to the Jews they became Jews*, ( 1 Cor. 9. 20. ) that so they might gain them, not by a Spirit of servile Compliance, but by the enlarged spirit or true Charity, which is of too great a compass, to be limited within any narrow sub-division. By this Spirit it was, that while St. Paul was a Prisoner for the Gospel, some thinking to add affliction to his bonds, *preached Christ not sincerely, but out of malice and envy* ; ( Phil. 1. 15 ; 18. ) yet so Triumphant was the Spirit of Univer-



Universal Love, and of Zeal for the Honour of his Blessed Master, in him, that herejoiced in this, That Christ was Preached : And then do we become his Followers, when by a Degree of the same Spirit, we can so far raise our minds above all the narrownesses of a Party, that tho we were assured that those men who differ from us, were in the wrong, and had ill designs against us, yet we would conquer them in the Spirit of the Gospel, and so overcome their evil with our good.

Upon all such occasions we ought not so much to consider what we owe to these with whom we have to do, as what we owe to our selves, to the Church, and to the succeeding Generation : So that if we can see how we may do that which may produce good effects at any distance of time from us, we ought to do it ; though it should not, like a Charm, have a present sensible Operation ; nor ought things that are offered at for Peace, be rejected, if they are in themselves reasonable, because we cannot be assured before hand, that those in whose favour they are proposed, will be gained by them : The Church will always gain both with God and Man, by offering at Peace as much as is possible, and as much as in her lyes ; nor are we to stop in a good thing, because the effect is not certain ; in such cases we may well trust the Providence of God ; and things that will be their own Apology, are never the worse, if they are defeated by the sowness of unreasonable men ; on the contrary, as the one side will have the more Glory, so the other will be the more inexcusable, when great Concessions are frankly made, but unhand somely rejected.

To crown all ; We have still one reason to persuade us to reflect a little more frequently on our being Brethren, since we know our Enemies do it to purpose ; their Bottom is on Absolute Authority and Infallibility, that are maintained by Implicit Faith, and blind Obedience ; which gives them indeed Advantages that our Principles do not allow us ; yet it is an unaccountable piece of the perverseness of humane nature, that false Persuasions should have so great an Influence, when certain Truths are so feeble ; and when all the weight that our Saviour has laid on mutual Love and Charity, shall have so little force, while some false Notions work more certainly. Our Adversaries have indeed among them, many differences, both in Doctrine and Practice, not to mention a vast variety in their Rituals, that are much more important

than any of those are, about which we are divided; and yet as soon as they see the Common Cause concerned, they can lay all these to sleep, in order to their running down their Common Enemies; but we by a fatal obstinacy continue our Disputes, and heighten our Animosities, when our Enemies are in our Bowels, ready not only to take advantage of our Passions, but to devour us; while we, instead of securing our selves from them, seem only to be set on devouring one another, This is from God, and gives us a Melancholly Prospect of itself; but a much more melancholly one, when we have reason to look upon it as a Judgment of God on us for our sins, and as a forerunner of our destruction. We seem now to be in the like State with that in which *Jerusalem* was, when our Saviour said of her, *How often would I have gathered thee under my wings, as a hen gathereth her brood, but thou wouldst not!* ( Luke 13. 34. )

This leads me to consider the first Circumstance in which the *Israelites* were, that made it more necessary for them to remember that they were *Brethren*, since they were then in *Egypt*, in bondage to a Cruel, Treacherous, and ungrateful Tyrant, who had both Strength enough to master them, and rage enough to destroy them. It is true, such has the goodness of God been to us, that we are not now in *Egypt*; but we were lately very near the being brought under that Yoke: and if we do not manage the happy Opportunity that is now in our hands, we have reason to apprehend that we shall quickly fall again under it. The Scene that has been lately acted in *France* and *Savoy*, has given us sufficient warning of what we ought to expect when we fall under such *Pharaohs*, who will neither remember *Joseph*, nor the most signal Services that can be done them, nor have any of the tenderness of Humanity, not to say of the Compassions of Christianity, but who will by a slow oppression eat out the Estates, and spoil the Houses of those they call Hereticks, and give them all the vexatious disquiet that they can contrive; and then, when all is consumed, will separate the nearest Relations, and throw them into terrible and noysome Prisons, without any regard to Age or Sex, to Sickness or Infirmary: And the very attempt of flying away from so dreadful a Misery, will be made a Crime to be punished by the greatest severity to which men can be adjudged; to be chain'd to a Bank, and to tug at an Oar, in the most uncomfortable state of life that is imaginable. This is what many thousands in *France* have suffered, and still do suffer; and has driven vast multitudes out of their

their Countrey from their Dwellings and Families, naked almost, and destitute of all things: you have seen so many crying Instances of this Cruelty, that it is not necessary to enlarge further upon it: and you have received, and relieved them with such a bountiful hand, and so tender a Charity, that you have reason to hope that there is a Blessing reserved for you, proportioned to the labour of Love you have shewed, who have ministred to so many of our persecuted Brethren, and still do minister.

We here, had formerly reason to have looked for no better usage; we know their Church is Uniform in her Proceedings against Hereticks; the Spirit and Principles are the same every where; so we had no reason to have expected to be exempted from the fate of others, if we had been delivered over to them whose tender mercies are cruel. We saw that they remembred not *Joseph*, not only in the Age after he was dead, but that immediatly after the greatest Service that could be done, and the most solemn Promises that could be made, all was forgotten: and if there appeared at any time any relenting, it was like that in *Egypt*; for when *Pharaoh* felt the weight of the Divine Displeasure, he was so far wrought on, that he was willing to let the People go; but that Terrour was no sooner over, than his heart was hardned; so that his good Temper went off, and all his Promises were forgotten. Some, perhaps are so foolish as to imagine, that present Misfortunes may have wrought a Change somewhere, and that they now see past Errors, so that they would not venture to fall again into the same Follies, that had proved so fatal to them. But yet such Persons ought to consider that *Pharaoh* was *Pharaoh* still, and would be so still, after all the Changes of Fortune through which he could pass; Obligations and Engagements will be but feeble things. And we must expect to be the most miserable Nation under the Sun, if after the Escape that we have made, we should again fall back into the same Hands; not only the old Crime of Heresy must be brought against us, but our Presumption in daring to set our selves free, and to accept of the Deliverance, which God has so wonderfully wrought for us, would be thought the greatest of Crimes, and be aggravated by all that could be invented to make it look odious. We have in such a Case the most deplorable State of Misery imaginable to look for, all the Hardships of Prisons, all the Cruelty of  
rough



rough Treatment, and after the lengthned Misery of ill Usage, such a terrible Death, as they may think, will give us the most exquisite Misery; so that all the Ease and Pleasure we might hope for, should be to be speedily delivered by a quick Execution out of their Hands; their Temper and Principles are of themselves, cruel enough, but when these are sharpened by Resentment and Revenge, then new Contrivances of Cruelty are to be expected.

This is that *Egypt* out of which we are delivered, I wish I could say delivered. Alas, *Ireland* is not! but is still in Bondage with her Children, and like to be a long Scene of Blood and Misery, nor can our Deliverance be compleat till that is perfected; and tho' we here are not at present in their power, yet it is but too evident that many wish we were. If these were the avowed Members of that Body, it ought not to surprize us, but that many who seem zealous against it, should yet by their whole Conduct be carrying us back thither, is more amazing. Can any Man be so void of Understanding, as to forget so soon what was so lately done? or imagin that any Change in the Affairs of our Enemies, can have changed either their Principles or their Hearts, unless it be to the worse? And yet after all this there are not a few, that say plainly *Would to God we were in Egypt again, for it was then better with us than it is now.* Others are not so sincere as to speak out, but their Actions speak for them. Some are uneasy, because they can no more persecute their Brethren. Others, because they can no more insult over their Neighbours. Some are afraid of suffering a little of the great deal they deserve: While, on the other hand, others are acted with another Extream of Fury, and under the pretence of punishing past Errors, seek only to gratify their own Revenges, and so drive others to the common Folly of all that are in any present Danger, to wish for any thing that may deliver them from that, how fatal soever it may prove afterwards.

These unruly Agitations of Mens Minds on both hands, are the very Plague that our Enemies ought to wish to us, that while *Pharaoh* pursues, we may stand still quarrelling with one another till he can overtake and destroy us, and thus, in stead of securing our selves against the Common Enemy, we create many new Ones among our selves, and expose the whole to the Rages of those who can have no Mercy.

The second Circumstance of the Affairs of the *Israelites* was, That they were upon the point of being redeemed out of their Bondage, and being made one of the most Glorious Nations that ever was: The Prophecy relating to it was near the assigned Period; and it seems it had begun already to be understood, that *Moses* was to be the person to be employed in it, for we find here that he imagined they had known it, which shews that it was got even then into many Hands. And now if we turn this towards our Selves, here is a Dawning to a Happiness, and a Deliverance begun, that carries with it all that is desirable to us. Whether this is a beginning of this great Restitution of all Things, which is supposed to be held forth in Prophecy, and to be near its accomplishment, is that which I will not undertake to affirm; but this is certain, that since the first beginnings of the Reformation, the Face of the Times never looked so bright towards that blessed Work as it does at present. There was never such a happy conjunction of Interests among those who professed it, as there is at present; nor were ever these Kingdoms, and the *United Provinces*, in such a close conjunction as they are at this day. And on the other hand, the great Persecutor of Protestants, has, by his Violence and Injustice, raised against himself so strong an Alliance of Princes of the same Religion, that it is visible the Signs of the Times give us all the grounds of hope, that we can propose to our selves; nor can any thing disappoint all this, but first our Sins that may provoke God to appear against us, and then our mutual Animosities and Quarrellings that may distract us at Home. If Men will forget their present Danger, and only think of former Provocations, if both Sides are studying to aggravate Matters one against another, and seeking and improving all the Advantages they can find; if the repeated Interpositions of Him, to whom, under God, we owe our present Quiet, and our late Deliverance, cannot inspire us with softer Thoughts: If, I say, we continue firm to these ill-temper'd Resolutions, What must the conclusion of all this be, but the Ruin of Religion, and the loss of Liberty? We will appear to all the World, as well as to all succeeding Ages, the most unthinking, and the most blinded Nation under Heaven, the least sensible of Religion, and the least capable of Liberty; that have not the regard due to the One, nor the sense and the vertue necessary for the Other; and that after all the noise we have made about Religion, that we have none at all;

and that after all the Concern we have shewed for Liberty, we neither deserve it, nor can maintain it. Upon our Behaviour at present depends all the Prospect, that humanely speaking, we can possibly have of our Religion's not being wholly extirpated, at least in all these parts of the World. If in this Fermentation and Crisis the Design miscarries, there is nothing so black and dismal, as that which we ought to look for. We will be despised by all our Enemies, as much as we are now hated by them; we will fall unregarded and unpitied; and if such a Misery is reserved for us, we shall have one aggravation of it, that as the damned in Hell are supposed to curse and reproach one another, so if we fall again into a state of Persecution, both Sides will be reproaching, and next to cursing one another for it. Weaker Minds will be struck with this, that the miscarriage of so great a Design, that was carried on so far with such unlook'd-for Successes, looks as if God had only let things go so far of our Side, that all the World might see in our mismanagement of them, that we are under a Curse which no Successes could remove, and under a Madness that was past all Cure. What Prospect can we have, or whither can we so much as think of flying, if our present Settlement should be overturned? The view is so terrible, that if that should happen, the Thing which next to it a good Man would chiefly fear, must be his own out-living it, and not perishing in it; since after such a Miscarriage, nothing beside Miracle could retrieve that, without which Life would be a perpetual Burden to a wife or a good Man. These are not Words of Pomp, nor the undue Aggravations of a Misery, which can never be fully express'd in words, and which I pray God may never be felt in deed by us.

At such a Time as this, is it fit for us to raise up into our Thoughts the unreasonable remembrance of all the Errors and Follies into which the Weakness and Credulity of some may have led them, who yet as soon as they saw how they had been deceived, seem'd sensible of former Faults, and stood firm afterwards? If, I say, all these Things are to be canvass'd with rigour, how can it be hoped that Mens Minds should ever be settled or freed from those Apprehensions that may tempt them to think of securing themselves at any rate? And on the other hand; Men whose Passions have once so fatally misled them, as not only to be concerned in the shedding of Innocent Blood, but in the exposing the whole



Nation to be destroyed, ought not to suffer the like Passions to return afresh upon them, to the keeping up and heightning our Differences, and to the reviving our Animosities, by a pretended Zeal for the Church, which they have once already endangered to the highest degree; it were more modest and becoming in them to be silent and retired, than to study still to trouble our Waters, and to sow the Seeds of new Dissentions among us, and so commit new Faults in stead of repenting of old Ones: all these indecent Errors of all sides concur, to let us see how far we are yet out of the way, and give us reason to conclude, that our Deliverance was too quickly wrought for us; that we were not long enough in distress, and that we are not yet wholly purged from our Dross, but that we must go thro a fiery Trial, which will either purge us more entirely, or consume us quite.

But if after all that Heat which we are raising in our selves, or in others, we would grow so calm and so wise as to remember that we are Brethren, this would quickly give us another view of Things, and make us see our Madness while we are so much worse than the two Israelites in my Text, who did *wrong one to another*, for we wrong our selves and our common Concerns in the wrongs that we do to one another. Are not the hard Speeches we throw out, and the severe Words that we fasten on one another, Injuries of a very high Nature? We first hate one another, and then study to render one another as odious, both to our Selves and to all the World, as possibly we can: We are possess'd with a Spirit of Jealousy and Distrust, which makes us easily believe all the Ill that we can hear of those that differ from us, and to create to our selves groundless Apprehensions and Fears; and when such an ill Temper has once corrupted us, we are easily led to all the Injustices that do follow Parties and Divisions on the account of Religion.

God be thanked for it, that there is an end put to all Persecution in Matters of Conscience; and that the first and Chief Right of Humane Nature, of following the Dictates of Conscience in the Service of God is secured to all Men amongst us; and that we are freed, I hope, for ever of all the Remnants of the worst Part of popery that we had too long retained, I mean, the Spirit of persecution. If this gives uneasiness to any it shews that their Eye is evil, because the Eye of our Legislators has been good towards those, who tho they may be mistaken in their Notions, yet have

still the Rights of Men and of Christians. But after all this it is to be remembered, that Men may be still Persecutors, though they are not able to persecute any longer, according to our Saviour's Charging the Guilt of intended Sins on those who never acted them: for as long as we entertain Hatred and Malice in our Hearts, and wish that it were in our Power to do hurt to others, so long we become guilty before God, and so do wrong to our selves, though we are not in condition to do them any; but if we do them all the wrong we can, we shew what our Tempers are, and that we Would do more if it were in our Power. If we love to keep up old Differences, or to create new Ones, if we will continue to make the Terms of Communion with us as strait as possibly we can, and shut out all Persons, as much as in us lies, from joining Labours with us because they do not in all Things think as we do: If we will by turns imploy all the Interest we have in any Turn of Government that is kind to us, to do wrong to others, either by loading them with false Accusations, by aggravating some lesser Matters, or by an undue prosecution of real, but repented of Faults; All these are the several Instances, in which an injurious Temper shews itself; and while such things are among us, we are under the Guilt that is Charged on these *Israelites* in my Text, though they were Brethren, Yet did Wrong one to another.

While we are so liberal in throwing out of Lies and Slanders, or at least, while we do so easily believe them, and so willingly report them, we shew that whatsoever our want of Power to do Mischief may be; yet that our inclinations are still full of Malice and Wickedness, and while we are under the power of such ill Tempers, we are far enough from the Blessedness of Brethren that dwell together in Unity: Indeed this Disease is gone too far to admit of any other Cure, but what must come down from Above from the God of Love, through the effusion of the Spirit of Love and Peace.

The Corruption that is rooted in our Natures, is too deeply fixed there to be cured any Way, but by an Interposition of a Divine Power. We see that neither the consideration of Reason nor of Interest; neither the sense of Honour, nor the apprehension of Danger, are strong enough to prevail over the Prejudices of our Education, or those angry Impressions which we have so long Cherished in our selves and in others, that perhaps we are now scarce Masters of them, and therefore since the  
Disease

Disease has gone so deep, we must look up to him who alone can Cure it; we must all consider, that such an Evil Spirit prevailing among us at such a time, is a plain Indication of Gods Anger that is kindled against us. Therefore before this proves our Ruin, let us all turn to God with our whole Hearts, and Repent us of the Evil of our ways, and Cry mightily to him, That so he may Arise, and Save, and Deliver us; who by our Sins and our Divisions are brought so very Low, and who must yet fall into the most abject and miserable State possible, if God do not bless us with a healing Temper, and with healing Counsels, That so we may go on to Perfection, and Compleat those Great Things which God has begun to work for us, and in which we our selves have fatally stopt the Course of his Mercy to us, and that we may both Live as Christians, and Love as Brethren; That the God of Love and Peace may delight to dwell among us, and Bless us, That this Church may become more and more, that which she truly is, *The Praise of all the Churches, and the Joy of the whole Earth*, and that every one of us in our own particular may, at last come to dwell in those Regions above, where all are made perfect in Love; which may the God of Love grant us, for the sake of him that Loved us, and that gave himself for us; to whom be Glory and Dominion for ever. *Amen.*

F I N I S.